

Vt. Agency of Human Services
Integrating Family Services
Learning Community
Session #2

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Vermont Agency of Human Services

Integrating Family Services (IFS)

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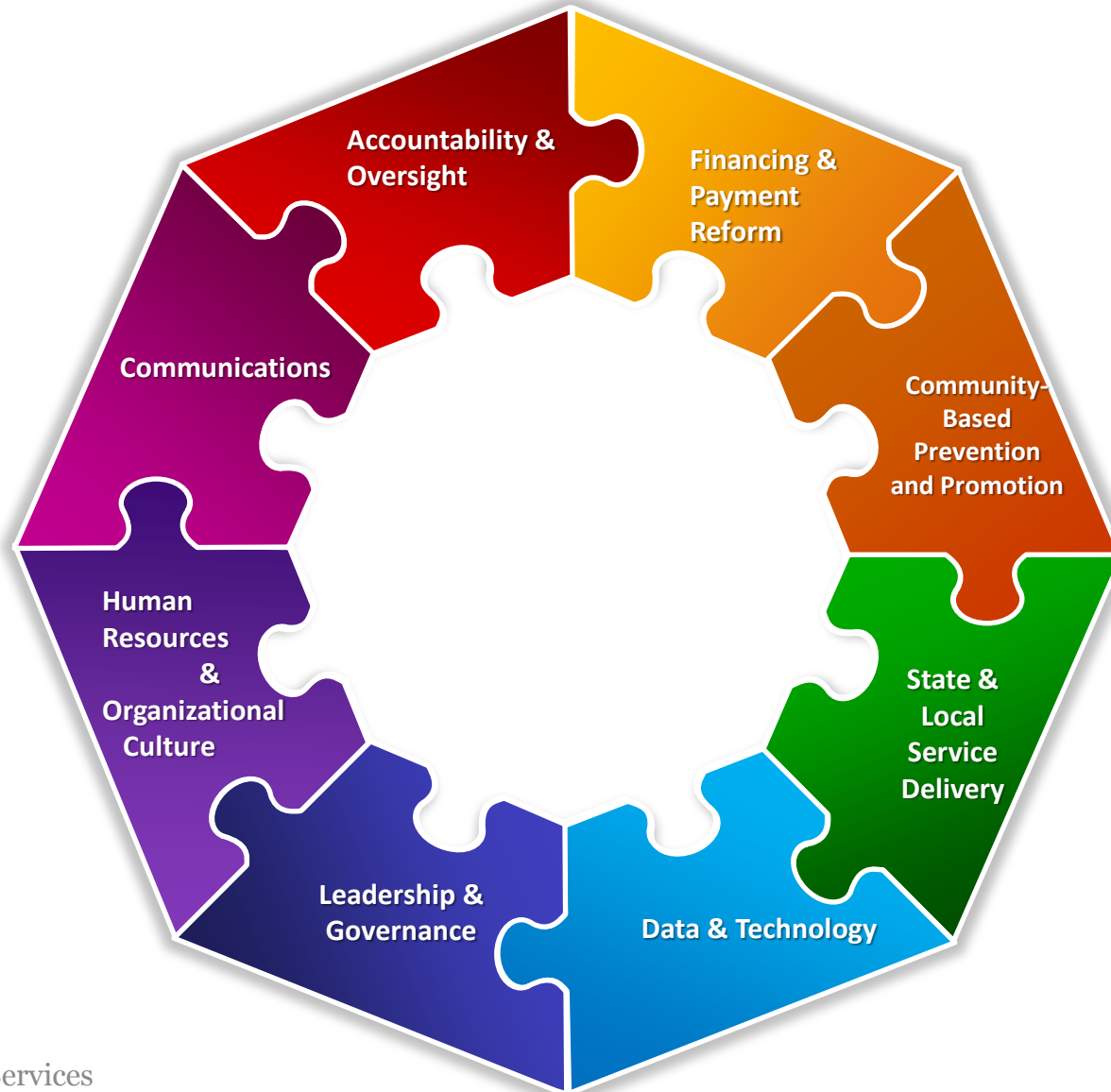


**If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.**

~African Proverb

AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

Integrating Family Services (IFS) Model



Integrating Family Services



Vision

Vermonters work together to ensure all children, youth and families have the resources they need to reach their fullest potential.

Mission

Integrating Family Services brings state government and local communities together to ensure holistic and accountable planning, support, and service delivery aimed at meeting the needs of Vermont's children, youth and families.

<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/Integrating-Family-Services>

This is how we describe IFS when going up three floors in an elevator.



Integrating Family Services creates a cultural shift in the way human services does business.

We are moving the focus from counting how much we are doing to tracking if anyone is better off.

This shift is created by making funding more flexible so agencies can offer children, youth and families the right services, at the right time.



The Guiding Principles of IFS

These guiding principles give life and form to Integrating Family Services' vision and mission.

1. **Promote the well-being of Vermont's children, youth and families.** Policies, services and service providers are sensitive and responsive to the unique aspects of each family.
2. **Build communities' capacity to provide a full range of resources in a flexible and timely way that is responsive to the needs of children and youth (prenatal through age 22) and families.**
3. **Focus on the individual and the family.** Understand the child's needs in the context of his/her family.
4. **Ensure that families' voices inform processes, plans and policies.**

5. Adopt the strengthening families approach. Strengthening families' five protective factors guide our work.

6. **Invest in a skilled, competent and valued workforce.** People working with children, youth and families need training, support and adequate compensation.
7. **Balance innovation with families' experiences, research and data to inform decisions about how to best use available resources and achieve positive outcomes.**
8. **Assure continuous quality improvement.** Data informs decisions and drives change at the state and local level.
9. **Promote a common language, shared decision-making and cross-disciplinary team work.**

Guest Presenter:
Cailin O'Connor
Coordinator of CSSP's
Strengthening Families National Network

Cailin supports states and jurisdictions in their implementation of the Protective Factors Framework to improve outcomes in a variety of child and family serving systems. She has been involved with Strengthening Families since she began coordinating Wisconsin's state efforts in 2005.

Since then, Cailin has worked with several states and national organizations on their Strengthening Families work. With a background in evidence-based programs and their dissemination and implementation, she also contributes to the Center's efforts to mobilize residents to achieve and sustain improved outcomes at the neighborhood and community level.

Introduction to Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework

Cailin O'Connor, Center for the Study of Social Policy

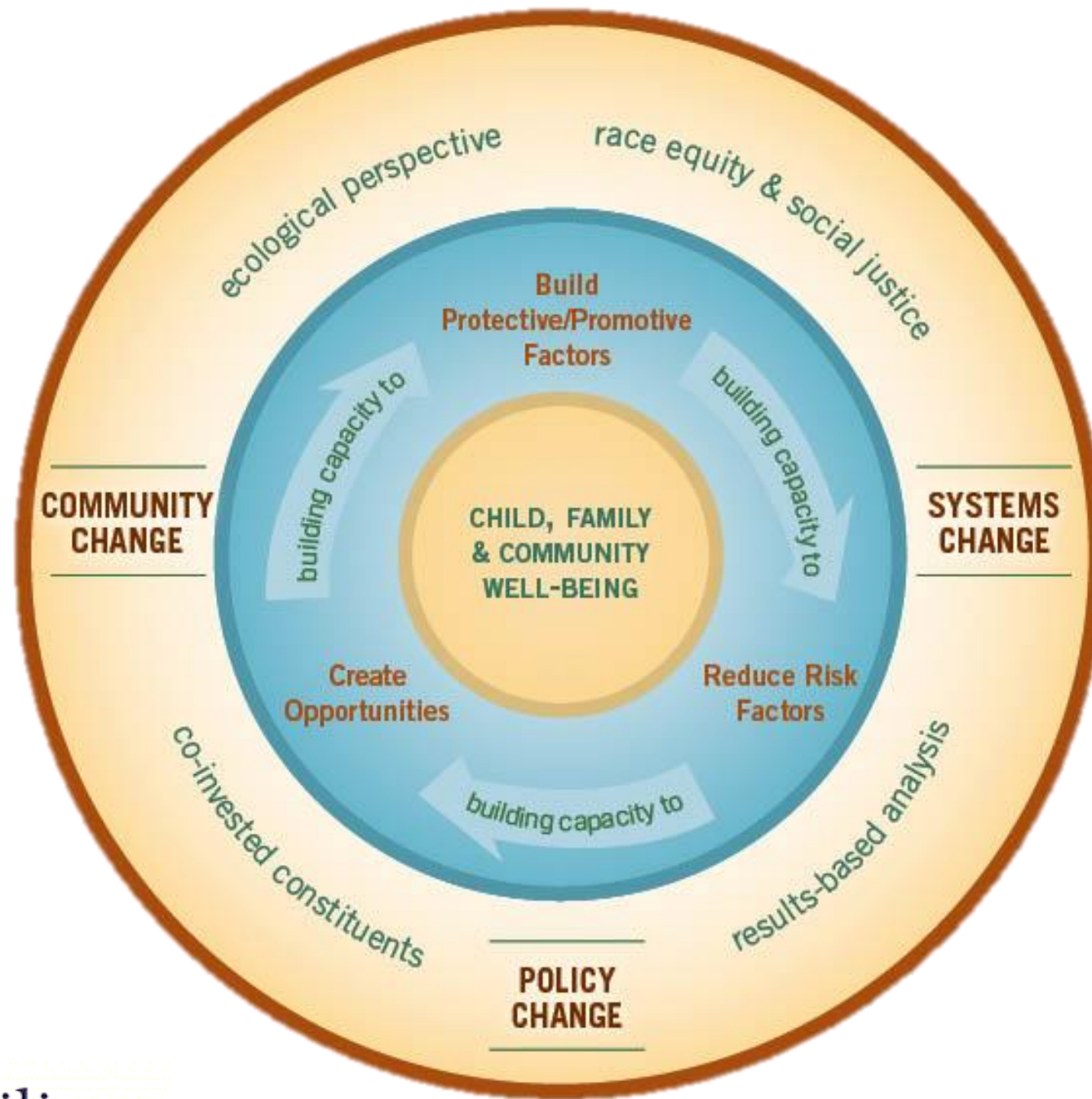
Vermont Integrated Family Services

Learning Community Call

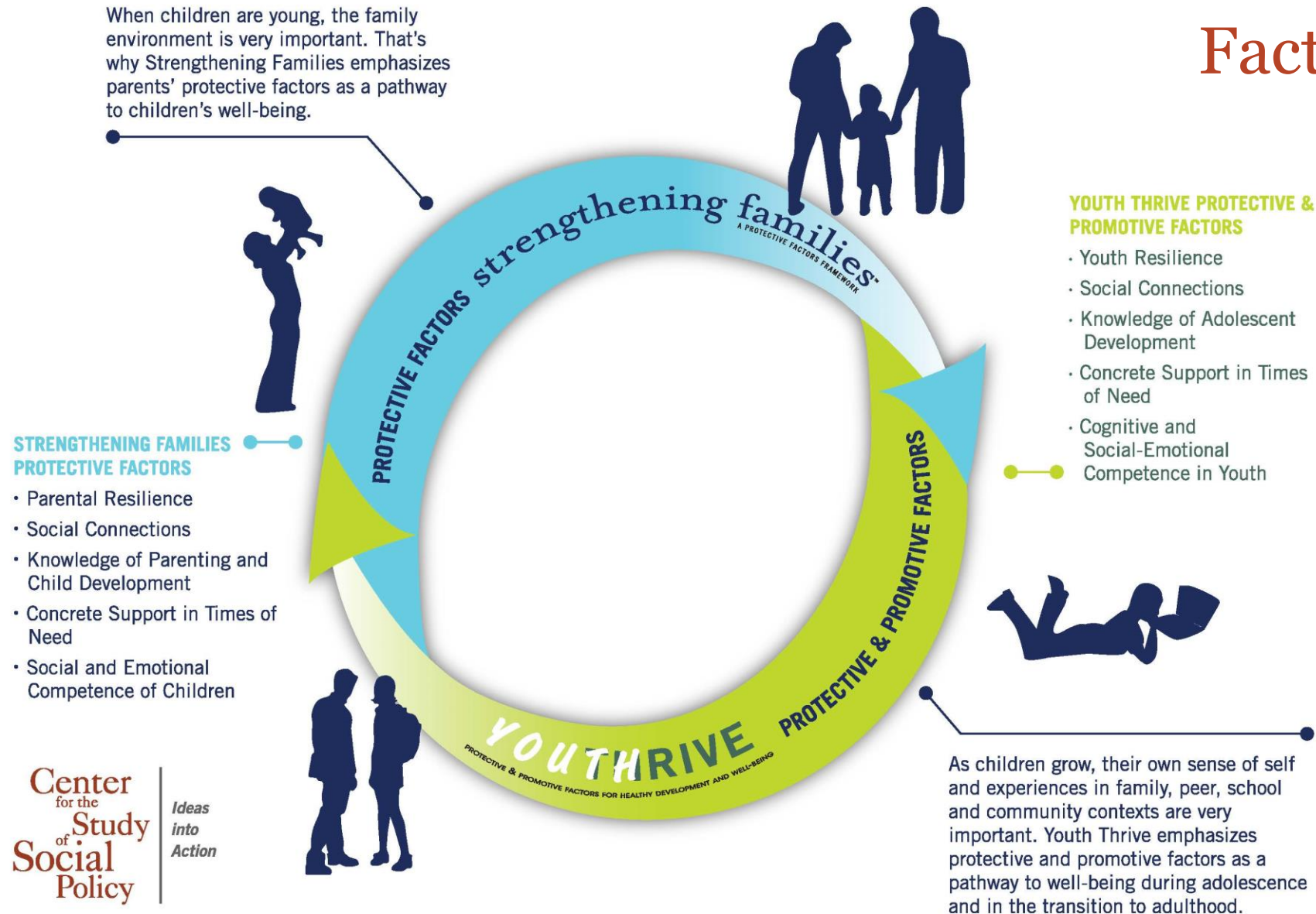
April 28, 2015

CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF SOCIAL POLICY'S

strengthening families™
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK



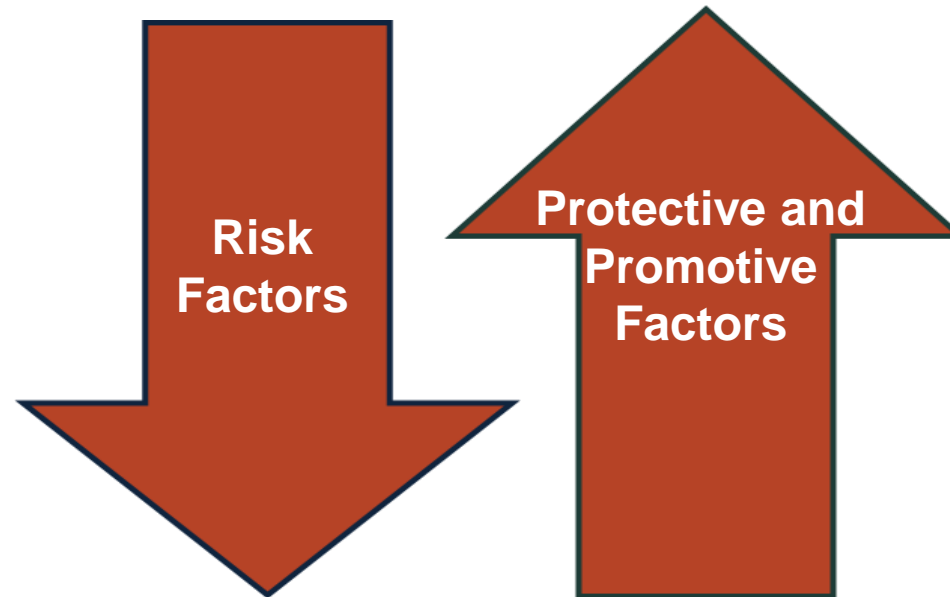
A Protective/Promotive Factors Frame Across Development



Strengthening Families: Not your ordinary initiative

- Implementing Strengthening Families is about:
 - small but significant changes in everyday practice
 - and*
 - the shifts in policies and systems that allow/promote those changes in practice
- Implementation funds come from existing dollars
- All national implementation tools are available free of charge

Big Idea #1: A Protective Factors Approach

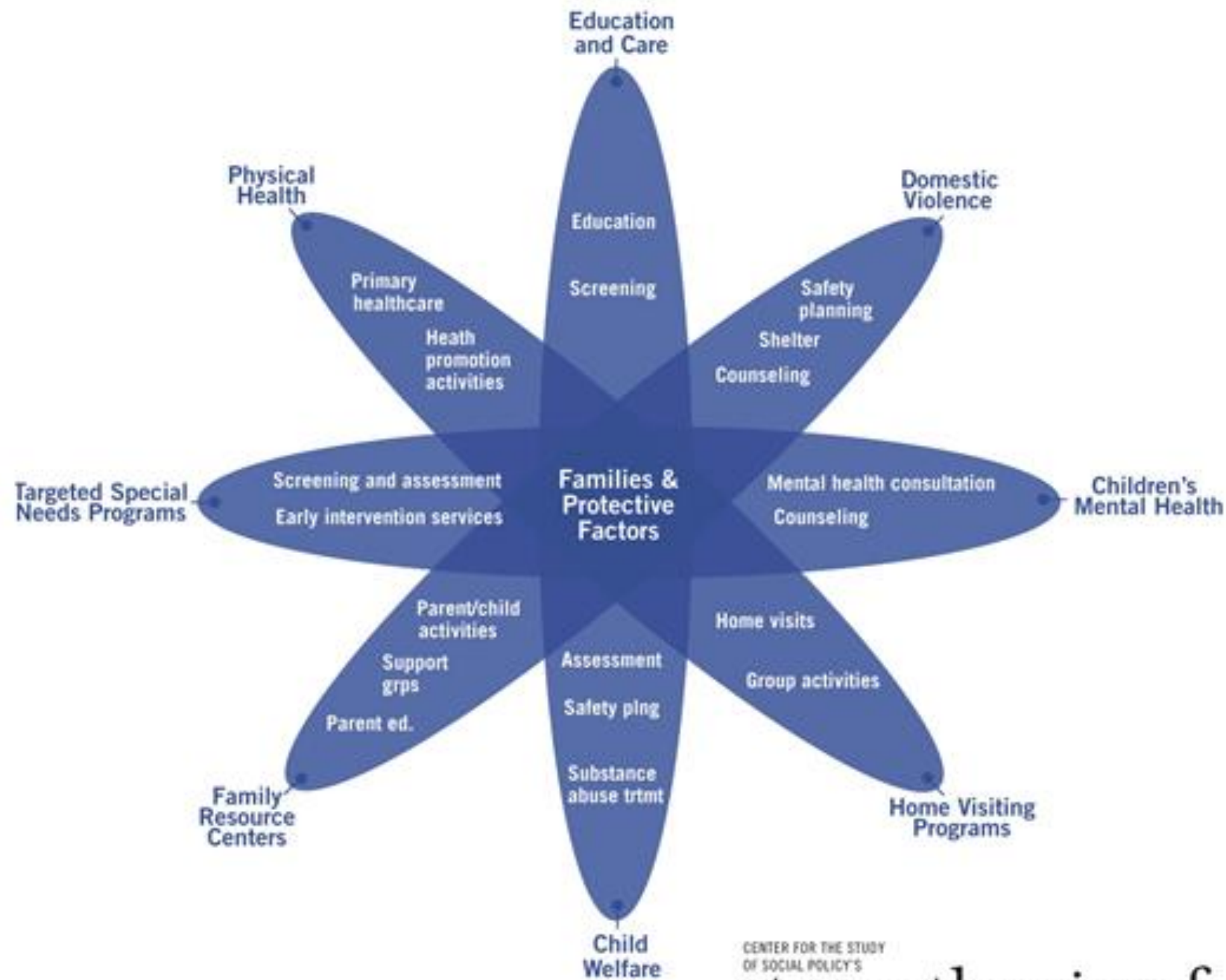


- Protective Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk
- Promotive Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that actively enhance well-being

What we know: Families gain what they need to be successful when key protective factors are robust in their lives and communities

Big Idea #2: An Approach, Not a Model

- Research-based and evidence-informed
- Applied in any setting that serves young children and their families
- Implemented through small but significant changes
- Not parallel to, but integrated into existing practice
- Cross-sector implementation as core to the approach



CENTER FOR THE STUDY
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strengthening families™
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

Big Idea #3: A Changed Relationship with Parents

- Supporting parents' ability to parent effectively
- Involving parents as partners in achieving good outcomes for children
- Engaging parents effectively through programs
- Engaging parents directly in mutually supportive relationships that build protective factors
- Partnering with parents to help design systems and policies that work for children and families

Big Idea #4: Alignment with Developmental Science

- Paying attention to what the research tells us:
 - Critical periods of development – early childhood and adolescence
 - Importance of nurturing relationships in early childhood
 - Effects of trauma on development, behavior and outcomes
- Providing tools and guidance to align practice with what we know about child development

Five Protective Factors

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

KNOWLEDGE of
PARENTING and CHILD
DEVELOPMENT

CONCRETE SUPPORT in
TIMES of NEED

SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL
COMPETENCE of
CHILDREN



Parental resilience

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma

What it looks like

Resilience to general life stress

- Hope, optimism, self confidence
- Problem solving skills
- Self care and willingness to ask for help
- Ability to manage negative emotions

Resilience to parenting stress

- Not allowing stress to interfere with nurturing
- Positive attitude about parenting and child

Parental resilience

Everyday actions

- Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued
- Honor each family's race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting
- Encourage parents to manage stress effectively
- Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills
- Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times

Youth Resilience

- The process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with adversity or trauma
- Resilient young people:
 - Have close, supportive connections with trusted adults
 - View themselves in a positive light
 - Are aware of their emotional responses, can modulate their arousal and manage impulses
 - Possess strong communication skills
 - Have confidence in their ability to solve their own problems – but can ask for help when needed

Youth Resilience: Implications

- Youth need adults who will help them to:
 - face challenges competently
 - make productive decisions, including when and how to seek help
 - think about results of their actions and take responsibility for them
 - positively influence their development and well-being

Social connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support

What it looks like

- Multiple friendships and supportive relationships with others
- Feeling respected and appreciated
- Accepting help from others, and giving help to others
- Skills for establishing and maintaining connections

Social connections

Everyday actions

- Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections
- Create an inclusive environment
- Facilitate mutual support
- Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities

Social Connections in Youth Thrive

- Emotional support
 - Informational support
 - Instrumental support
 - Spiritual support
-
- Peer connections are especially important in adolescence
 - Identity – self-concept and sense of self
 - Independence – emotional, cognitive and behavioral autonomy

Youth Social Connections: Implications

- We can support the development and strengthening of social connections
- Young people need social connections with peers *and* with caring adults
- Pay special attention to:
 - “Testing” behavior
 - “Too quick” relationship development
 - Transitions

Knowledge of parenting & child dev't

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development

What it looks like

- Nurturing parenting behavior
- Appropriate developmental expectations
- Ability to create a developmentally supportive environment for child
- Positive discipline techniques; ability to effectively manage child behavior
- Recognizing and responding to your child's specific needs

Knowledge of parenting & child dev't

Everyday actions

- Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children
- Provide information and resources on parenting and child development
- Encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies
- Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective

Knowledge of adolescent development

- Youth understanding of:
 - The changes they are experiencing
 - The risks and opportunities of this phase of life
 - Reasons for their conflicting urges, mood swings, etc.
 - Strategies to improve their own well-being
- Adult (parent, caregiver, worker) understanding of:
 - Reasons for behaviors that can be challenging
 - The need for continued adult support and guidance
 - The need for opportunities to advance development

Knowledge of adolescent development: Implications

- Environments need to be emotionally & physically safe
- We need to be caring and nurturing:
 - Understand the meaning of behavior
 - Be aware of developmental needs – renegotiate roles
 - Value young people
 - Provide opportunities to explore, make choices, make mistakes & grow
 - Listen & seek to understand who the young person is
 - Opportunities for self-expression & voice
 - Affirm assets, skills, and competence

Concrete support in times of need

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges

What it looks like

- Seeking and receiving support when needed
- Knowing what services are available and how to access them
- Adequate financial security; basic needs being met
- Persistence
- Advocating effectively for self and child to receive necessary help

Concrete support in times of need

Everyday actions

- Respond immediately when families are in crisis
- Provide information and connections to services in the community
- Help families to develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports

Concrete Support for Youth

- ...those things that we can count on when we are in need of extra help or resources
- ...can make it easier to get through a hard time or to address a specific issue

Concrete Support for Youth: Implications

- Promote help seeking
- Provide/refer to services that are individually focused, culturally responsive, grounded in respect and trust
- Provide a positive experience to build trust
- Engage youth as helpers in mutual support networks
- Be flexible and available to respond to youth needs

Social & emotional competence of children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships

What it looks like

For the parent:

- Warm and consistent responses that foster a strong and secure attachment with the child
- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills; setting limits

For the child:

- Age appropriate self-regulation
- Ability to form and maintain relationships with others
- Positive interactions with others
- Effective communication

Social & emotional competence of children

Everyday actions

- Help parents foster their child's social emotional development
- Model nurturing care to children
- Include children's social and emotional development activities in programming
- Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
- Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support

Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence in Youth

- Essential developmental tasks in adolescence
- Lay the foundation for forming independent identity
- Promote productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood
- Many experiences we provide for young people focus on either cognitive or social-emotional development – we need to focus on the “whole person”

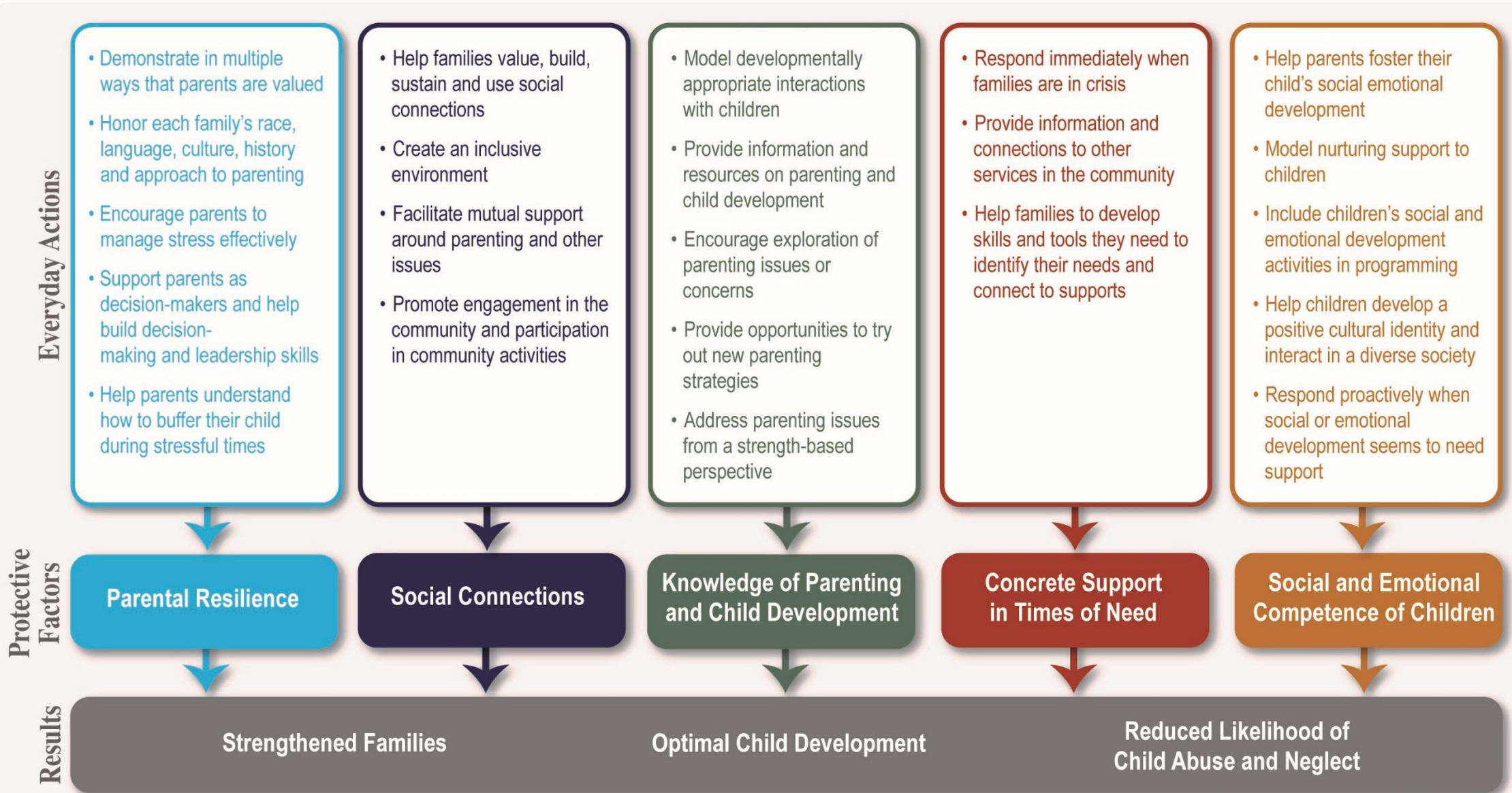
Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence in Youth: Implications

- Need safe environments to reduce brain activation and expand brain resources
- Change takes time
- Access to experiences that support competence building
- Adults acknowledge competence and successes
- Validate the experience of failure and its feelings
- Reframing success

*So what does
a protective factors approach
look like in practice?*

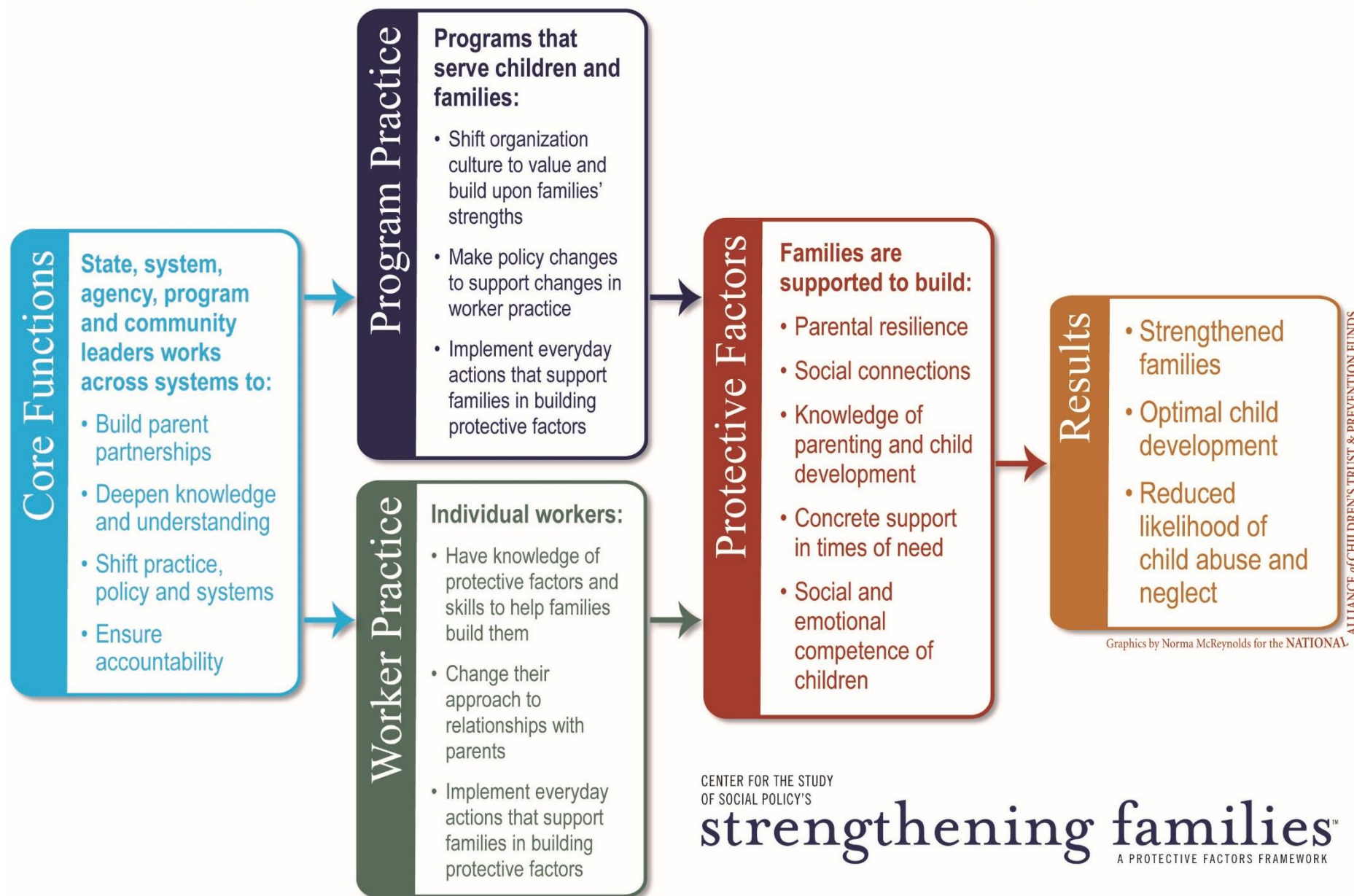
The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families

Everyday Actions That Help Build Protective Factors



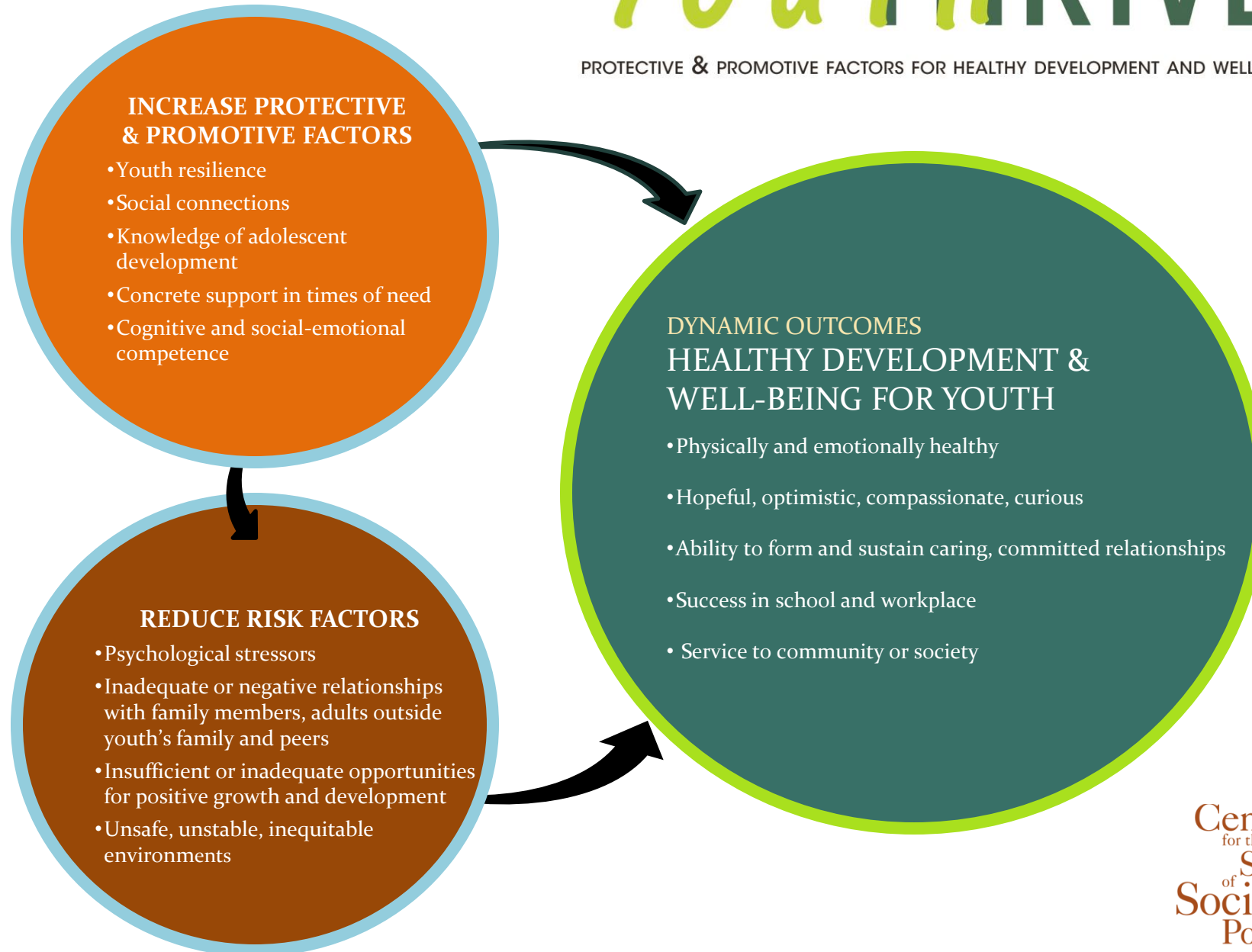
The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families

Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework Logic Model

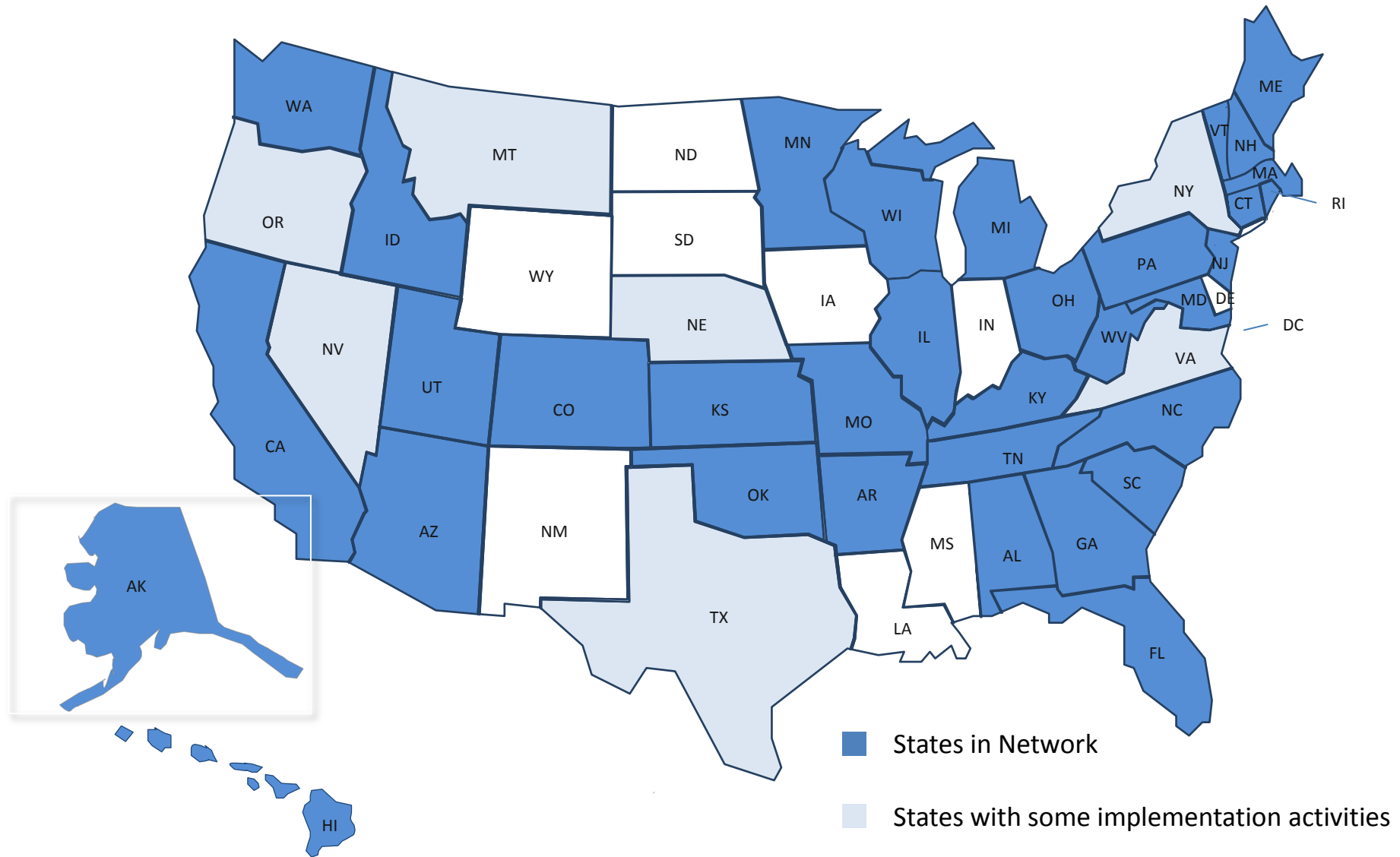


YOUTH THRIVE™

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING



Implementing States (2015)



What are states doing?

- Rolling out training to professionals in various fields
- Using the Protective Factors Framework to facilitate conversation and collaboration across systems and across program models (e.g., evidence-based home visiting models)
- Shifting their child welfare practice models
- Writing protective factors into policy and regulations

What are communities doing?

- Using the Protective Factors Framework to facilitate conversation and collaboration across systems
- Enlisting new partners that play a role in the lives of children and families (e.g., churches, businesses)
- Holding Parent Cafés or Community Cafés to engage parents in conversation about issues that matter

What are programs doing?

- Approaching parents from a place of partnership
- Using the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment tool to identify small but significant changes to their daily practice and procedures
- Learning about other resources in the community that can support parents in protective factors beyond their focus

Applying Youth Thrive and Strengthening Families together

- Working across age ranges of children and youth in a program or caseload
- Supporting young parents who need support for their adolescent development at the same time as they need support in their parenting role

Many resources available at
www.strengtheningfamilies.net





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